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UNCLAS ZAGREB 000562

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPARTMENT FOR L/PM (MITCHELL) AND EUR/RPM (SEIDENSTRUCKER)

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [MARR](#) [PREL](#) [KTIA](#) [HR](#) [NATO](#)

SUBJECT: CROATIA: "EXPECT PROGRESS SOON" ON BILAT
SUPPLEMENTARY AGREEMENT TO PFP SOFA

REF: STATE 70858

1. (SBU) AS INSTRUCTED BY REFTTEL, ON MARCH 31 AND APRIL 1, WE AGAIN PRESSED RELEVANT MFA AND MOD OFFICIALS FOR A RESPONSE TO OUR REQUEST TO NEGOTIATE A BILATERAL SUPPLEMENTAL AGREEMENT TO THE PFP SOFA.

2. (SBU) ASSISTANT FOREIGN MINISTER PJER SIMUNOVIC ASSERTED THAT THE SANADER GOVERNMENT HAS GIVEN NEGOTIATION OF AN AGREEMENT A HIGH PRIORITY, BUT ADMITTED THAT THE GOC'S ANSWER IS OVERDUE.

3. (SBU) MFA EXPERTS ADMITTED THAT THE DRAFT AGREEMENT LANGUISHED DURING THE CHANGE IN GOVERNMENT AND THAT THE POLITICALLY SENSITIVE LANGUAGE IN ARTICLE V OF THE DRAFT TEXT (SIMILAR TO AN "ARTICLE 98" AGREEMENT) HAS MADE IT A HOT POTATO. THE GOC HAS NOT EVEN AGREED WHETHER THE MFA OR THE MOD WILL HAVE THE LEAD IN NEGOTIATIONS. THANKS TO OUR REPEATED ENGAGEMENT, THE GOC HAS FORMED AN INTERAGENCY WORKING GROUP AND HAS SET A TIMETABLE FOR WORKING ON THE AGREEMENT. THE WORKING GROUP WILL MEET FOR THE FIRST TIME ON APRIL 5. BY THE END OF APRIL, THE GOC EXPECTS TO PRESENT TO THE EMBASSY ITS AREAS OF CONCERN. DURING UPCOMING BILATERAL DEFENSE CONSULTATIONS (NOW SLATED FOR WASHINGTON ON MAY 11), THE GOC WOULD BE PREPARED TO HAVE A FIRST FORMAL "DISCUSSION" ON THE AGREEMENT, FOLLOWED SHORTLY THEREAFTER BY A FINAL NEGOTIATING SESSION.
FRANK

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